

July 1, 1975

TO THE LENINIST TROTSKYIST FACTION STEERING COMMITTEE

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are the following items:

1. A report on the May 31-June 1 United Secretariat meeting by Atwood with two attachments.
2. Excerpts from a letter by Joel Britton, the organizer of the Chicago SWP branch, on Bill Massey's newest political affiliation and a letter from John Barzman to the United Secretariat on the same topic.
3. The IMT Bureau's reply to the PST Executive Committee statement, "In Reply to the IMT's Open Letter No. 2," which was adopted by the LTF and presented to the January, 1975 IEC Plenum. The IMT Bureau's reply is entitled, "The Differences Between the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the PST."
4. Correspondence between the SWP Political Committee and the United Secretariat on International Cadre School plans.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters

REPORT ON MAY 31-JUNE 1 UNITED SECRETARIAT MEETING

by Atwood

There were two contradictory aspects of the meeting at the end of May. An extremely tense factional atmosphere was generated by the IMT members who insisted on taking up several organizational matters in a purely factional way. At the same time, factional tensions were considerably eased during discussion of the political questions on the agenda. In some cases discussion broke through factional line-ups, creating a more favorable atmosphere for productive discussion than has been the case for some time.

The main political points dealt with Argentina, Indochina, Spain, and Portugal. The discussion on these points benefited from the presence for the first time of Julio, the PST observer of the new United Secretariat elected at the January IEC meeting. Guillermo, a PST IEC observer, was also present. A leading member of the Portuguese LCI was present for the discussion on Portugal. A Portuguese PRT leader also happened to be in town at the time and the LTF members proposed that he be invited to sit in on the discussion as a positive step toward aiding the process of discussion and collaboration favored by the two Trotskyist organizations in Portugal that align themselves with the Fourth International. Unfortunately, this proposal was rejected by the IMT majority on the ground that a telephone call to Portugal for consultation indicated objections by LCI leaders.

The main organizational issues were the May SWP National Committee Plenum's decisions concerning the IT grouping in the United States, the manner of recording votes in minutes of the IEC and United Secretariat meetings, and finances.

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1. The IT Question. A three-point motion was adopted by the SWP NC Plenum: "1) To uphold and commend the July 4, 1974, action of the SWP Political Committee, both the procedures followed and the general line of the statement made by the PC evaluating the meaning of the IT split. 2) To accept the recommendation of comrades Hansen and Barnes to weigh favorable implementation of the proposals commonly agreed on by the International Control Commission. 3) To assure objective and equal consideration of all former ITers, regardless of their current affiliations (the original IT referred to in the IEC resolution having broken up), to refer all requests for membership to the appropriate branch unit of the party." (See Mary-Alice Waters's report to the SWP NC Plenum, "The January 1975 Plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International," SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 33, No. 4, June 1975.)

IMT leaders violently objected to these decisions, claiming "non-compliance" by the SWP with a "deal" made at the IEC meeting. LTF leaders pointed out there was not and could not be any deal outside the unanimous resolution on this point and that it had been carried out to the letter. No motions were presented on this point but the IMT Enlarged Bureau presented a statement to be attached to the minutes. This statement was included in the June

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17 mailing to the LTF Steering Committee.

2. Minutes and Finances. Here the IMT leaders continued to insist on inaccurate and misleading formulations regarding formal relationship to the Fourth International of fraternal and sympathizing parties and groups. In a demonstration of factional irresponsibility they pushed through some unacceptable motions on these matters. However the minutes containing these motions have not yet appeared. It is to be hoped that cooler heads have prevailed and that the forthcoming meeting will reconsider and rescind the motions.

3. Argentina. A report by Domingo on the repression being suffered by our comrades in Argentina developed into a general discussion of the economic and political situation. A positive exchange of opinions resulted in which IMTers did not denigrate and gave due importance to the role being played by the PST in the mass movement. Julio and Domingo were to jointly work up a public statement on the repression in Argentina. (See Inprecor No. 29.)

4. Indochina. Roman gave a verbal report, in which the major new element was the conclusion that South Vietnam had become a workers state with the assumption of governmental power by the PRG, which is to say, the Vietnamese CP. Cambodia was reportedly well along the road to becoming a workers state for similar reasons. The general line of the report was adopted with LTF members voting against.

5. Spain. Discussion on Spain was to have been continued from the previous meeting. The two sympathizing groups in Spain were to meet and discuss the possibility of presenting a common document. If agreement could not be reached, the Liga Comunista leadership was to present its own document for discussion. The two groups did meet and came to agreement on some common actions, but did not agree on a common document. The LC, however, was unable to prepare its counter to Walter's draft in written form in time to be translated and circulated in advance of the United Secretariat meeting.

The IMT leaders refused to postpone the discussion so that the LC document could be translated and read. They insisted on a vote on Walter's draft (which was in English) against LTF objections. It was published in Inprecor No. 29.

6. Portugal. The discussion centered on a draft resolution by Duret. This was an updated version of the draft presented to the previous meeting and, though it contained some improvements, retained essentially the same faults.

A significant aspect of this discussion was that for the first time in many months the factional barriers to a frank and open discussion of new events were weakened, if not completely broken down. Different positions were taken among both LTF and IMT members on such things as the nature and role of the Armed Forces Movement; the meaning of the large SP vote in the constituent assembly elections; the meaning of the SP-CP, MFA infighting; the

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importance of the government closing of the newspaper, Republica, and the position we should take toward it; the need to call for immediate withdrawal of all Portuguese imperialist troops from Angola, and the correct governmental demands to be raised ("CP-SP-Intersyndical," "soviets," "MFA-CP-SP," etc.)

It is clear that some of these differences are of vital importance and that the discussion is only at the beginning.

In spite of the differences expressed during the discussion, all IMTers were in favor of the general line of Duret's draft after first agreeing on the composition of the committee that would edit it for publication. All LTF members voted against the draft resolution.

Galois presented a short motion on the nature of the MFA for a vote. (See attached.) Julio voted against this motion. All IMTers voted against the motion with a statement. (See attached.)

Although no motion on Angola was presented for a vote, it was clear that many of those present were at that moment opposed to adding to the resolution a demand for the immediate withdrawal of Portuguese troops from Africa. This will be one of the important points to be discussed at greater length at the forthcoming meeting. The resolution appeared in Inprecor No. 29.

Some of the differences on the Republica affair have already been expressed in an exchange of correspondence between Mandel, Maitan and Frank and the editor of Intercontinental Press, and in an article written for IP by Mandel (Vol. 13, No. 24, June 23, 1975). The letters were included in the June 17 mailing to the LTF Steering Committee.

### Attachment 1, Galois Motion

With regard to the MFA, the line we put forward should be the following:

The MFA is a part of the officer corps of the imperialist army of Portugal; it represents the fundamental interests of the Portuguese capitalist class.

In face of the rise of the class struggle in Portugal, the MFA has adapted its original policies and has divided internally over what policies to put forward. Some elements of the MFA have been increasingly utilizing pro-socialist terminology. Nevertheless, these lines of cleavage within the MFA take place within the framework of fidelity to capitalism. The interests of the working class can be expressed only through political and organizational independence from the MFA.

The popularity of the MFA among the Portuguese masses, and the illusions that the workers and their allies have in the MFA are major obstacles to the advance of the class struggle in Portugal. Accordingly, one of the central tasks of revolutionary Marxists is to expose the nature and role of the MFA in order to help dispel the illusions that the masses have in it. This can be achieved through a systematic propaganda campaign in the Trotskyist press and by putting forward concrete demands designed to foster the development of independent working class action and organization. Of particular importance is the need to counterpose the demand for a workers and farmers government to the present government in which the mass workers parties, the CP and the SP, participate in a coalition with bourgeois formations like the MFA.

### Attachment 2, Walter statement on Galois motion

We vote against this motion not because we are in disagreement with all of its formulations and characterizations of the MFA, but because we reject its simplistic approach and we believe that by singling out this one question from the whole complex of problems with which the revolutionary Marxists are confronted today in Portugal, it does not help the FI and the LCI to determine its main tasks and priorities of activity today.

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Chicago  
June 24, 1975

SWP National Office  
New York

Dear Comrades,

I ran into Bill Massey, former coordinator of the Internationalist Tendency and until recently a fraternal observer on the IEC; Don Smith and Butch Hutton tonight.

Since Massey recently resigned from the IT and IEC, and since he was seen carrying a large bundle of the Marcyite Workers World newspaper last weekend, I asked him if he had joined the Workers World Party. He said no, he hadn't, but that he was planning to.

I asked Smith, a former member of the IT and subsequently the Class Struggle League; and Hutton, author of the notorious "Dead Skunk in the Middle of the Road" document in the 1973 YSA discussion, if they were also signing up with the Marcyites. They said they were.

I neglected to ask, but I assume upon reflection that this means that Hutton is no longer applying to join the SWP. Former ITC Paula Westfall, also seen recently in the company of Marcyites, may be re-considering her application to join the party.

Rich Mitten, until the April conference of the IT a member of its political committee, and Mark Lobato, supporters of the IMT but not members of the IT(New Faction) have not shown much enthusiasm for selling the Militant, contributing money or attending public affairs of our party. For instance, no one from this current (Mitten, Lobato, Hutton, and Westfall) attended our kick-off campaign rally for Camejo and Reid last Saturday.

In a similar vein, I call your attention to the latest issue of the Spartacist paper for an informative article on the "Trotskyoids" of the Class Struggle League. It confirms the rumors we had heard on the further evolution of Gregorich and Passen out of the "League" they founded.

I suppose you noticed Sam Marcy's polemic with Joe Hansen on the evacuation of Phnompenh and Marcy's defense of the shutting down of Republica. Once you decide Stalinism in power equals a workers state it's a logical step. If the YSA is a "Dead Skunk" I wonder what our new recruits to the Marcy cult will say now about Maoism and Stalinism in general, and about Marcy's hatred of the Fourth International in particular. I also wonder if they expect to find more of the norm of Leninist democratic centralism in a group that doesn't even hold conventions and where Marcy's word is law.

A number of the Chicago members of the IT(NF) seem to be taking quite seriously the party-building work we've outlined. Others clearly don't have their heart in it. We will certainly give those individuals that pitch every chance to prove themselves. We can sure use more forces.

Comradely,  
s/Joel Britton  
Chicago Branch Organizer

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John Barzman  
[address in original]  
Chicago, IL

June 24, 1975

United Secretariat  
Brussels

Dear Comrades,

This letter is to report some information which may be of use in making a swift disposition with regard to Cde. Massey's letter of resignation. Recently, he has become inactive and dropped out of the IT new faction. Further, at a rally in defense of Joanne Little, held Saturday June 21, 1975, I saw him carrying a bundle of the newspaper "Workers World", the organ of the Workers World Party and Youth Against War and Fascism. Other indications from our former comrades Don Smith and Ed Hoffman seem to indicate that this is part of a general political retreat toward this pro-Stalinist sect. I would recommend an immediate break-off of all party-relations with him and the acceptance of his resignation.

Comradely,

/s/ John Barzman

cc: National Office, SWP, Attn: Barry Sheppard

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE UNITED SECRETARIAT OF THE  
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE PST

I. THREE RED HERRINGS

In order to divert attention from their opportunist errors, the comrades of the PST Executive Committee introduce into their answer to the USFI's criticism of these errors three red herrings that have nothing to do with the problems the United Secretariat raised in regard to the PST's policies:

1. "Guerrillism vs. Trotskyism--the real issue"?

The PST document contends that the United Secretariat's "adherence" to guerrilla warfare "lies behind" its "public attack" on the PST, that the United Secretariat's "Open Letter No. 1" and "Open Letter No. 2" were written "within the framework of this pro-guerrilla line."

From the standpoint of substance, this is of course nonsense; worse, it is a conscious distortion of the documents voted at the 10th World Congress and the January 1975 IEC Plenum, that is, of the positions adhered to by the majority tendency of the F. I. These documents make it crystal clear that what the majority tendency is concerned with when it speaks of armed struggle in Argentina is the need to prepare and organize the proletariat for mass self-defense against reactionary military coups like those that triumphed in Bolivia and Chile. The resolution on armed struggle in Latin America adopted by the 10th World Congress of the F. I. explicitly "rejects the Debrayist conception of the guerrilla 'foco' and related illusions long promoted by the Cuban leadership. According to this way of looking at things, the activity of small nuclei with the determination to undertake military initiatives can be a sufficient motive force of revolutionary struggle and replace both the activity of the Leninist party as well as the mobilization and organization of broad masses, which in the last analysis are regarded as auxiliary elements." (Intercontinental Press, December 23, 1974.) We say only armed resistance by the masses can defeat the coups of fascist murderers and torturers.

From a formal standpoint, the argumentation in the PST document is even more flimsy. The fact that the PST opposes the pro-guerrilla line is in no way a guarantee against right-wing deviations. The fact that the orientation of other currents is pro-focista or pro-guerrilla does not at all imply that their criticism of reformist illusions and Social Democratic deviations is therefore basically wrong. Throughout contemporary revolutions Social Democrats have been very vocal against "putschism." This was the cry raised by the right-wing leaders of German Social Democracy in 1918-1919 against the young communist revolutionists of Spartakus. No serious Marxist historian will deny that

the Spartakus comrades were indeed guilty of some adventurous errors and even of putschism during the January 1919 uprising. But this does not in the least justify the political line of their opponents, nor does it make their criticism of the Social Democrats and centrists less pertinent.

Likewise, the "right wing opposition" of the German Communist party around Heinrich Brandler correctly criticized many ultraleft deviations of the official Stalin-Thaelmann faction of that party during the crucial years of the rise of fascism, 1930-33. But these correct criticisms of ultraleftism were no guarantee against right-wing deviations, as Trotsky pointed out again and again in harsh polemics against Brandler and his followers. In fact, the whole history of the communist movement indicates that automatic suspicion is warranted with regard to any tendency that concentrates its polemics exclusively or essentially against "ultraleftism." After all, in the world in which we live the main opponents of revolutionary Marxism within the working class and the organized labor movement, let alone within bourgeois society as a whole, are not "ultraleft putschism" or "guerrillism," but rather class collaboration, reformism, and opportunism.

2. Critical support for anti-imperialist measures taken by the colonial bourgeoisie

This is another red herring; it has absolutely nothing to do with the subject under discussion. Of course, we are ready to support wholeheartedly any concrete anti-imperialist measure taken by a bourgeois government in a semi-colonial country, but without giving political support to that government, without creating any sort of illusion in its capacity or willingness to pursue a consistent anti-imperialist struggle, and without abandoning the organizational or political independence of the working class and its revolutionary vanguard. This issue is not involved in the discussion with the PST. We did not "refuse" to support Isabelita's war of national independence against U. S. imperialism, after the model of Trotsky's support to China's war under Chiang Kai-shek's leadership against Japan--for the very simple reason that there has been no such war and none is in the offing. Nor did we "refuse" to support Isabelita Peron's onslaught against imperialist property in Argentina, after the model of support to Cardenas's onslaught in Mexico during the 1930s--for the very same reason: No such onslaught has taken place.

In fact, we contend that Peron's return to power, far from being the expression of any serious conflict between the Argentine "national bourgeoisie" and imperialism, took place with the full support of world imperialism, including U. S. imperialism, because imperialism considered the Peron regime as the only way to divert and



break the revolutionary upsurge of the Argentine masses, which was threatening the survival of private property both in that country and in a large part of Latin America,

Whatever minor conflicts exist today between imperialism and the Argentine government are, for the time being, absolutely marginal. In fact, the new Argentine minister of economic affairs has gone out of his way to point out that he invites not only European and Japanese but also U. S. capital to flow into Argentina.

This does not exclude the possibility that sharp conflict might break out again sometime in the future. We would then adopt the traditional position of revolutionary Marxism in such cases. But to cover up today's concessions to the Peronist government in Argentina by referring to past or potential future conflicts between the Argentine "national bourgeoisie" and imperialism means to depart from the Marxist method. Should we perhaps conclude that the PST Executive Committee has now adopted the Menshevik-Stalinist theory of "stages" and that the PST holds that since conflicts between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism are still possible, Marxists should desist from their task of developing to the utmost not only the trade-union struggle between capital and labor, but also the political class struggle to overthrow the power of the Argentine bourgeoisie and its state machine?

The comrades of the PST raise a big hue and cry because we presumably failed to stipulate the semi-colonial nature of Argentina. This is another red herring. Of course, Argentina is not an imperialist but still a semicolonial country. But this formula can be used to create confusion instead of to clarify. The Transitional Program of the F. I. clearly states: "The relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat's struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and to a considerable extent--by the degree of backwardness." From that point of view, it is obvious that Argentina today is the most developed of all semicolonial countries; that is, it is the one whose class structure is closest to that of imperialist countries. In fact, the weight of the industrial working class in the total active population, the absolute number of workers, and their concentration is greater than in several imperialist countries. Even real wages and the average standard of living are nearer to those of imperialist countries than to the average in the colonial and semicolonial countries; in fact, they are higher than those of an imperialist country like Portugal.

In that sense, the PST document is clearly misleading when it harps on Trotsky's formula; "For the backward colonial and semicolonial countries, the struggle for democracy, including the struggle for national inde-

pendence, represents a necessary and progressive stage of historical development." Trotsky makes clear what he means by "democracy" in that context: the struggle for national independence against a foreign oppressor or for agrarian revolution against feudal or semifeudal overlords. He does not identify that "struggle for democracy" with the defense of bourgeois parliaments against reactionary coups--in that respect there is no basic difference between the way democratic rights have to be defended in semicolonial countries and the way they must be defended in imperialist countries.

Since the question at issue in the USFI polemics against the PST does not relate to any concrete conflict between the Argentine bourgeoisie and foreign imperialism or semifeudal landlords, but rather to conflicts between capital and labor and divisions within the "national bourgeoisie," the PST's references to Trotsky's positions on semicolonial countries are largely irrelevant.

### 3. The need to defend democratic rights against capitalist attempts to destroy them

Again, this is a complete diversion. In none of its writings has the International Majority Tendency, the United Secretariat, or the International Executive Committee ever placed this elementary principle of Marxism in question. If tomorrow a civil war breaks out in Argentina against a fascist coup, we shall of course fight side by side with the workers against fascism, irrespective of the fact that Balbin or Isabelita also "fights" in the same camp (if they fight, which is a hypothesis we wouldn't stake a lot of money on). If tomorrow the workers organize "only" a large mass strike, or even only a big demonstration, against fascist terror or reactionary legislation, again it is elementary that we would participate in that struggle, irrespective of whoever else participates alongside the workers or leads the struggles initially. But this is not what is at stake in the current polemics. These polemics turn around a different question: Whether a revolutionary organization that is confronted neither with a civil war, nor with a massive strike nor even with a massive demonstration against fascism, but rather with government-organized terror against working class militants should divert attention from that terror and pledge support to that government under the pretext that this government could be threatened by a fascist coup or overthrown by an even more reactionary regime. What is also at stake is the question of whether the mobilization of the working class to defend its democratic rights will be aided by political blocs with bourgeois parties and by illusions sown about the willingness or readiness of these parties to "fight fascism," or whether on the contrary such blocs and illusions demobilize the masses and thereby prevent an effective fight for democratic rights.

To claim that these questions can somehow be subsumed under the general formula of "the need to defend

bourgeois democracy against fascism" means to erase in one fell swoop more than half a century of Trotskyist struggle against centrism and Social Democracy over the question of how to defend democratic rights.

## II. THE REAL CONTENT OF THE DEBATE

The declarations of the United Secretariat on the opportunist deviations of the PST raised a number of principled issues on which the first answer of the PST suggested the beginning of a self-criticism (hailed by the USFI as a step forward). But the second answer of the PST partially takes back these hints of self-criticism and makes the PST's revision of some of the principles of revolutionary Marxism more blatant.

### 1. Political bloc with bourgeois parties in the "defense of democratic rights"

It was and remains the contention of the majority tendency of the F. I. that by participating in a regular series of political meetings with the officially recognized parties of Argentina, including the main bourgeois opposition party, and by expressing its public willingness to sign common statements with these parties about the present political situation in Argentina, the PST was in fact entering a political bloc with the "liberal" bourgeoisie (and incidentally with the CP), the only basis and justification being the need to make common cause against the "threat of fascism." This raised an important issue: Is it correct to combat fascism in alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie, either before or after fascism takes power? The principled tradition of Trotskyism is well known and crystal clear on this question. The PST seems to depart from that position.

It is true that in its reply to the first statement of the United Secretariat the PST referred to the legitimacy of making technical arrangements with bourgeois forces, for the success of self-defense squads, for example. There was never any dispute about this. But no "technical" arrangement of any kind was involved in the successive meetings at the Argentine president's office between representatives of legal opposition parties--bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, CP, and PST. The answer of the PST Executive Committee accuses the United Secretariat of desperately searching through the statements of Comrade Coral and the PST, even taking sentences out of context, in an attempt to demonstrate that the PST holds that it is justified to make a political bloc with "liberal" bourgeois parties against a threatening reactionary coup. The PST leaders indignantly deny that they are looking for any political agreement with bourgeois parties. But they rather weaken their case and make their indignation less credible by stating:

"In seeking allies in this struggle we have always sought practical objectives such as the defense of political prisoners. and above all. concrete actions that. from

out point of view, would help mobilize the masses.

"It is true that our tactics and attitude have been different from that required in an imperialist country like France, Belgium, Germany, or the United States. That was because we paid attention to Trotsky's admonition concerning the difference between democrats in imperialist countries and those in colonial and semi-colonial countries." (Intercontinental Press, January 20, 1975 p.73)

Again, what is involved is not the legitimacy of technical arrangements with "liberal" bourgeois elements in the fight against fascists. Only a fool or a scoundrel would refuse to accept money or arms given to workers defense guards fighting against fascists (whether in an imperialist or semicolonial country) under the pretext that the aid is of bourgeois origin. What is at stake here is the question of a political bloc with the "liberal" bourgeoisie. In that context, the comrades of the PST cannot marshal any evidence that Trotsky advised such a Social Democratic policy. All the quotations from Trotsky that the document of the PST's Executive Committee advance to support its case deal with critical support to the "national" bourgeoisie's measures of struggle against foreign imperialist domination. They do not involve any political bloc with such a bourgeoisie, let alone in a struggle against indigenous reaction.

When the PST document restates its position, backtracking from the backtracking of its first answer to the USFI, it concludes "categorically":

"Meetings with the bourgeois opposition parties, . . . were neither regular nor institutionalized, nor led to any political accord, 'interclass' or otherwise.

"Our position is crystal clear. We never make strategic, programmatic, or long-term blocs with non-working class parties. Nor do we sign common political programs, or hold joint rallies of a general political type with such parties. With such parties we conclude only 'limited, specific, tactical agreements.' Such tactical accords serve essentially for propaganda campaigns on well-defined individual problems, and to a lesser degree and in exceptional cases for obtaining some practical gain. They therefore play only a relative role, since for our party only the mobilization of the working class can solve all the problems." (Intercontinental Press, January 20, 1975 p.73)

And somewhat further:

"We are against any bloc that crosses class lines. We are for practical agreements that help advance the struggle to institutionalize the democratic gains won through the Cordobazos. We are also decidedly in favor of a workers united front." (Intercontinental Press, January 20, 1975, p. 74.)

Unfortunately for the PST leaders, their position, far from being "crystal clear," becomes more ambiguous, more confused, and more contradictory the more they try to explain away their obvious mistakes.

The PST is against any bloc that crosses class lines. Excellent! But if the word "any" has any meaning, the sentence means "each and every bloc." A few sentences before, we hear a different story. There it is said that, while being against "strategic, programmatic, or long-term blocs" with non-working class parties, the PST favors "limited, specific, tactical agreements" with them. Doesn't that imply a "bloc which crosses class lines"? Only "tactical" and not strategic? Granted! Only "specific" and not "general"? Indeed. Only "short-term" and not "long-term"? We note the difference. Nevertheless: political agreements between various parties representing antagonistic social classes, involving common tactics and common propaganda campaigns, even around "well-defined individual problems," are "tactical political blocs" if they are anything, and not simply "practical arrangements."

Please, comrades of the PST, show us where Trotsky favored the conclusion of such "tactical short-term blocs" between revolutionary organizations, reformist parties, and bourgeois parties to defend democratic rights or to struggle against fascism, either in imperialist or in semi-colonial countries? You will have a hard time finding such references!

The PST Executive Committee's denial that what was involved in these regular interparty meetings at the Presidents Palace was indeed a "political bloc crossing class lines" (be it a "limited" and "purely tactical" one) sounds extremely hollow and written without much confidence. It is dated January 7, 1975. A few days earlier, in the December 30, 1974, issue of the PST's weekly Avanzada Socialista, there was published an "Open Letter" to its readers summarizing the political evolution of Argentina in the previous period. We find therein the following significant passage:

"Our party was one of the promoters of the specific, limited agreements by the group of the 'Nine,' for opposing this development (towards fascism). At the same time, we continually criticized and exposed the procapi-talist parties included in this bloc." (Intercontinental Press, February 10, 1975, p. 196. Our emphasis.)

Apparently, the categorical denial of the existence of any "bloc" is not only directed against the "slanders" of the bourgeois press, and the "slanders" culled from the bourgeois press by the United Secretariat, but also against the way the editors of Avanzada Socialista "slander" the PST leadership by assuming the existence of a "bloc" that allegedly never really existed except in the imagination of all the innumerable "enemies" of the PST, including

the United Secretariat and the editors of Avanzada Socialista.

Wouldn't it be more honest and more constructive to admit that what you formed was indeed a tactical political bloc with bourgeois parties, crossing class lines, and then either make a thorough self-criticism of this grave mistake or else defend the legitimacy of such a bloc on a principled basis, instead of denying what is self-evident?

Political blocs with the bourgeoisie "against reaction" or "against fascism" generally start on "purely tactical and limited basis" with forces that claim to be Marxist. To brazenly assert the need for a long-term strategic bloc with the bourgeoisie means obviously to become an all-out reformist. If we thought that the PST had become a reformist party like the Ceylonese LSSP, we would propose their immediate expulsion from the Fourth International. This is not the case.

What is at issue is precisely the political error of making "tactical political agreements and blocs" with bourgeois parties in the struggle against fascism. For limited purposes? Indeed. The Uruguyan followers of the PST have proposed a "limited tactical agreement with bourgeois parties" for "winning free elections" (a "limited" objective indeed). Tomorrow, we can be faced with a "limited tactical bloc" with the Junta Democratica in Spain for the liberation of political prisoners (a very concrete and worthwhile objective, if ever there was one!). What about a "tactical bloc" with the Portuguese Military Junta (including joint propaganda meetings) when democratic rights are threatened by a fascist coup?

Our opposition to such "blocs," whether tactical or strategic, does not stem from any blind, sterile dogmatism. Tactics should be judged in the light of their results. Principled acceptable tactics are those that further the cause of the proletariat's class struggle and self-emancipation, that help to raise the proletariat's class consciousness and self-confidence. Opportunist tactics are those that lead to results contrary to these goals. There is no other criterion by which to judge the advisability or incorrectness of a tactic.

It is our contention that engaging in common propaganda campaigns with bourgeois parties against the fascist threat strengthens the reformist and class collaborationist illusion among the working class that fascism could somehow be stopped and destroyed other than through the most resolute, energetic, and direct proletarian class action. It strengthens the illusion that if only the bourgeoisie could become more civilized, its politicians wiser, and the potential horrors of fascism more widely understood, then all "democrats" would make sure that fascist barbarism would not win.

Historical experience, however, indicates that this

illusion is completely unfounded and constitutes a heavy obstacle--sometimes, alas, an irremovable one, if the revolutionary vanguard is too weak--on the road to an effective struggle against fascism. Historical experience shows again and again that the more resolutely the workers struggle by direct action against the fascists, the less "civilized," "democratic" and "anti-fascist" the bourgeoisie becomes, the more it prefers a fascist victory to the threatened victory of the proletariat. Indeed, when the working class rises "by the millions" arms in hand against the fascists, 99% of the bourgeoisie, regardless of its "liberal" traditions or its support to the "institutional process," goes over to the camp of the fascists, as it did in Spain in July 1936.

Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie has a much sharper and clearer consciousness of the class interests at stake in civil wars than has the working class, and it allows itself much less to be led astray by high-sounding democratic phrases the class content of which is somehow obscured.

Now to hold a common "propaganda campaign" with bourgeois parties in defense of "democratic rights" means precisely to hide these objective dynamics of the class struggle that will decide the outcome of the struggle against fascism. The comrades of the PST add that in these meetings they will "denounce" the procapitalist participants. So did the POUM in Spain--and, one must admit, in a much sharper fashion than the PST, constantly shouting about the need for socialist revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, and workers militias. Unfortunately, the working class judges parties and develops consciousness not primarily in function of speeches, but in function of actions. And the "action" involved is a common action with the bourgeoisie, however loud the denunciation in words.

So the mass of the workers will conclude: The PST, like the CP, thinks that you can stop fascism in a bloc with the bourgeoisie. It is however more "dogmatic" and less "flexible" than the CP. Once you want a "bloc" with the liberals to oppose fascism because you believe it is indispensable, it isn't very practical to spit in the face of your indispensable allies.

All the reformist and neo-reformist arguments about the need to unite "all antifascist forces" are based around such a logic. Why make a tactical bloc with the liberals against the fascists if that bloc is not really necessary to beat the fascists? But if it is necessary and indispensable, then one obviously has to stop any policies and actions that would "drive the liberal bourgeoisie away from the antifascist front." And since the sharpening of the workers class struggle drives the bourgeoisie into the arms of the "fascist plotters," it is necessary to put the brakes on the workers class struggle in order to keep the "liberal bourgeoisie" inside the "tactical bloc" (pardon us: the "limited, specific, tactical agreements" with the liberal

bourgeois parties). This is the logic of Menshevism and of Stalino-Menshevism, of the revolution by stages: "first the victory against reaction; only after that sharper class struggle against capital." The PST does not follow that line, of course. But by accepting the idea of an antifascist "tactical bloc" with bourgeois parties "against fascism," it does strengthen illusions of that type among the masses and takes the first, hesitant steps on a road that could lead to that logical conclusion.

Here again, the question of the specific class structure of Argentine society comes into play. The nearer a semi-colonial country approximates an industrialized one and the larger the weight of the proletariat in the active population, the more the political life of the country is dominated by the conflicts between capital and labor and the nearer the concrete forms of proletarian antifascist struggle come to those Trotsky sketched out for imperialist countries like Germany.

In fact, the Argentine proletariat has a greater weight in society today than the Spanish proletariat did in 1936, when it represented barely one third of the active population. The PST document cites Trotsky's burning verdict about the Spanish civil war, seemingly without understanding what it reproduces:

"The participation of Spanish workers in the struggle against Franco was their elementary duty. But precisely and only because the workers did not succeed in time in replacing the rule of bourgeois democracy with their own rule, 'democracy' was able to clear the path for fascism." (Our emphasis.)

Yet without blinking an eye, the authors of that document draw from that verdict the conclusion that Trotsky taught them. . . to make a "tactical bloc" with the national bourgeoisie to stop the victory of fascism!

So terrible is the dialectical logic of political mistakes that the comrades of the PST are already taking a second (still hesitant) step on the road toward the concept of "revolution by stages." In Chile, under the reformist government of the Unidad Popular (which, in the eyes of the masses, was after all identified with an attempt at social revolution and not with a "power of the national bourgeoisie") they advocated full support to all mass movements against the government, even those by privileged sectors of the workers' aristocracy. But when there is a strike by policemen for progressive trade-union demands against the bourgeois "nationalist" military government in Peru, followed by an urban uprising of slum dwellers, the magazine Revista de America which is sympathetic to the views of the PST, speaks about "turbas ultraderechistas que, desafiadamente, salieron a incendiar y destruir dependencias publicas y a fomentar el saqueo de los establecimientos comerciales. Ni nunca antes tuvo que resguardar el orden institucional (sic! the military dictatorship) secando a las tropas y los tanques

a las calles e implantando el estado de emergencia y el toque de queda. De un solo vuelco se establecía ese clima de caos e incertidumbre que suele preceder a situaciones típicamente golpistas." (Marzo 1975)

And when the working class takes to the street and builds barricades to protest against high cost of living and starvation wages, does this perhaps also create a "clima de caos e incertidumbre que suele preceder a situaciones típicamente golpistas"? Isn't the CP right, after all, to state that it's the "leftists" and their unfortunate influence among the masses which created a similar "climate of chaos" that "prepared the coup" in Chile?

Look at these bitter fruits of your "tactical bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie against the threat of a coup," comrades of the PST! Think it through and return to Trotskyism, before it is too late.

The PST's Executive Committee document accuses us of "overlooking the mass support the GAN has." They accuse us of not understanding that "the government. . . continues to have. . . the political support of the immense majority of the workers movement." They heavily insist that "if the workers movement does not react against the repression this is because it is being carried out in the name of defending a government regarded by the workers as their own." And they conclude:

"Thus the policy prescribed by our critics, who call on us to 'resolutely orient. . . toward the line of the workers united front and the propagation and carrying out in practice of self-defense by the workers organizations themselves against the fascist terror,' simply sounds ridiculous to us.

"A workers united front? With whom? The relatively tiny Argentine Communist party? No, obviously a workers united front requires mass organizations, not small parties. A workers united front with the Peronist unions, which are the only mass organizations that exist? But the fact is that a whole 'sector of fascism' draws its support from the Peronist unions, which in their turn support the government as do the workers. So then, should it be a united front of the Peronist unions against the Peronist unions?"

This whole "polemics-for-polemics-sake" then culminates in the remarkable conclusion:

"The key (sic) to the situation, precisely, is that the Argentine workers in their vast majority do not think or feel that there is any need for the time being for self-defense against the fascists. They do not think so because in their extreme political backwardness, as shown by their support for the Peronist government and movement, they do not regard fascism as their main enemy for the time being . . . The working class, as a whole, for the

time being, is indifferent to the fascist threat." (Intercontinental Press, January 20, 1975, quotations pp. 78,79)

Hardly was this "deep" analysis published that life itself showed how wrong it was and forced the PST to make a turn. The "ridiculously sounding" slogan of a workers united front against repressive acts by the government was taken up by the PST itself; it doesn't seem to have been so ridiculous, after all! And far from being "indifferent" to the threat of repression, the working class started mass action against it, as exemplified by the admirable two months strike of the steel workers of Villa Constitucion against the suppression and subsequent arrest of their democratically elected union leadership by the government. This was a political mass strike against government repression by a sector of the working class. What remains of all the above polemics in the light of these subsequent events?

When the PST leadership says that the working class, for the time being, is indifferent to a fascist threat as currently "explained" by the PST, it proves thereby more than it intends to prove. Indeed, the working class is indifferent to such a threat, for the simple reason that the threat of fascists toppling the Isabelita-Lopez Rega regime and destroying the Peronist unions does not exist in Argentina today. The PST's tailending of the workers limited and partial support to the Peron government made it invent such a threat, in order to justify opportunist promises of "support" to that government.

But experience has already shown that the workers are in no way indifferent to the serious threat which repression against class struggle tendencies in the unions, anti-strike laws, wage freezes, mass arrests, and murders of workers cadres by the government represent to the labor movement. Against these real acts and threats of repression they have started to react. Was it so difficult to foresee this? Wouldn't it have been wiser to concentrate on the organization of this "workers united front" with all working class organizations, inside the plants and the neighborhoods, ready to join such a common fight, including all those sectors of the Peronist unions ready to do so, instead of diverting attention to the "multipartidaria" and acting towards "the Peronist movement" as a monolithic bloc around a bourgeois political party? It wouldn't then have been so foolish to conceive "of a united front with the Peronist unions," not against the Peronist unions but against the fascist goons of Lopez Rega and the anti-working-class measures of the Isabelita-Lopez Rega government. For it so happens that a growing number of peronist workers and even some union bodies are ready to engage in such a fight. But hypnotized by the general formula of the Argentine workers' "political allegiance to Peronism," not understanding the basic differences between the Peronist government number 2 and the Peronist regime of the forties and the early fifties in its relations to the mass movement, the PST leadership did not foresee the inevitable process of differentiation which had to occur within that mass move-

ment once Peron returned to power and tied itself unnecessarily in the opportunist tactical bloc with Balbin and no less opportunistic maneuver of "defending the continuity of the (Peronist) government." Simultaneously, powerful forces were already on the move toward a mass confrontation, not between the Peronist workers and "fascist anti-Peronist reaction," but between the reactionary, pro-fascist wing of the Peronist government and important sectors of the working class.

## 2. Identification between workers democratic rights and institutions of the bourgeois state

Here again, the PST comrades evade the issue by talking about other matters or by repeating elementary truths of the Marxist tradition that nobody challenges. And here also, grave matters of principle are involved.

It has been an old Social Democratic trick (repeated by the Stalinists first during the prewar "Popular Front" period and then in a more permanent way since the early 1950s) to identify the democratic rights that the workers have with the "democratic institutions" of the bourgeois state. This deliberate confusion is one of the pillars on which they base their class collaborationist strategy, their line of alliance with various bourgeois political forces, and (even without that alliance) their respect for and submission to the institutions of the bourgeois state, especially when they are in the government.

By using formulas that are confused, to say the least, the comrades of the PST have taken the first step on that very same road.

The PST document states that the "process of institutionalization" involves the "institutionalization of the democratic rights won by the Cordobazo." (Intercontinental Press, January 20, 1975, p. 73.) Even more clearly:

"Granting that the weakness of Argentine capitalism, coupled with the pressure of U. S. imperialism, precluded this constituting any thing more than a democratic interlude, what should our attitude be toward this opening? We decided that we ought to take full advantage of it. That meant doing everything possible to extend democracy and to institutionalize, that is, strengthen it. Above all, it meant opening an intensive struggle to gain legal recognition for our party." (Intercontinental Press, January 20, 1975, p. 69.)

In politics it never pays to try to be too clever. You may think that by using a given word in a manner different from the great majority of people, you are "tricking" the class enemy. In reality, you are only confusing the masses and sowing not a little confusion in your own ranks, too.

In Argentina the formula "institutionalization process" was used by all political parties and all the mass media (and understood by millions of people) to mean the replace-

ment of the military dictatorship by an elected bourgeois government of General Peron in order to stop guerrilla warfare and mass workers uprisings like the Cordobazo, all political and social forces submitting to the "verdict of universal suffrage and the decisions of Parliament." The PST comrades want to pick and choose, to have their cake and eat it at the same time. This may fool some factional associates of the PST in foreign lands, but it doesn't fool anybody in Argentina.

To say that you "understand" the "institutionalization process" as referring only to the "democratic rights won by the workers through the Cordobazo" and to the legalization of the PST (and other working class parties), and not as referring to the GAN, the economic agreement blocking wages, and the possibility of the "freely elected government" "institutionalizing" the state of siege and even temporarily suppressing the right to strike means to present a completely one-sided picture of what has been going on in Argentina since the general elections, a picture that nobody apart from the PST (and perhaps some naive left-wing Peronists) will understand.

Under the given social relationship of forces in Argentina, "institutionalization" as a political alternative bourgeois rule to the Onganía dictatorship can only mean a combination of all these aspects. If the PST did not understand that from the start, it was guilty of harboring grave illusions and of spreading them among the masses. If the PST did not understand this even today, after the wholesale repression of the left-wing unions and unionists and the mass murders of revolutionists and class activists, including cadres and militants of the PST, then its case would be hopeless.

We rather think that they understand it quite well, and that they are trying by semantic sleights-of-hand to hide their responsibility for covering up before the working class an alternative form of bourgeois rule and oppression that while partially increasing the scope of democratic rights is simultaneously increasing the scope of repression against the workers. (In fact, there was less repression against class-struggle tendencies in the unions under the military dictatorship, at least after 1969, than there is today during the "democratic interlude.")

The semantic sleight-of-hand includes essentially two tricks. First the "institutionalization process" is artificially reduced to the "institutionalization of democratic rights." But this is indefensible in the light of reality. It is as if a sophist would argue: "What worker can be against a solemn recognition of the right to strike, even by a bourgeois constitution? So why be against the institutionalization of the right to strike?" Every intelligent trade unionist, let alone any revolutionary Marxist, will answer: "Because such an institutionalization implies a regimentation, i. e. a limitation." History confirms this to be true, except perhaps under circumstances of an unfolding proletarian revolution

and generalized dual power, which was not and is not the situation in Argentina, either in 1973, 1974, or 1975.

Second, the counterposition of "fascism" and bourgeois democracy" is heavily utilized. The United Secretariat is accused of "journalistic," "incomplete," and "superficial" analysis, because it allegedly failed to take a stand on "precise class characterizations." Again and again we are asked: Yes or no, is there a "qualitative difference" between the present regime and a fascist dictatorship like Pinochet's? Yes or no, should the PST have sought legal status under the "bourgeois-democratic opening"?

The trouble with all these rhetorical questions is that in posing them the PST commits the very sin it accuses us of: superficial, journalistic, and incomplete analysis. A "fascist" regime is a precise term for revolutionary Marxists. It means a regime that completely destroys all working class organizations (even the most reformist ones) and completely atomizes the working class through physical terror. In that sense, Pinochet's policies are largely fascist, but Onganía's were not. The Argentine working class movement was not crushed under this military dictatorship as it is today in Chile or as it was under Nazi rule in Germany.

On the other hand, "bourgeois democracy" also has a precise meaning for revolutionary Marxists. It is not simply a regime under which some sort of "free elections" are held or under which some parties of the working class enjoy "legal recognition." It is a regime under which the working class as a whole enjoys the political rights conquered by the bourgeois-democratic revolution, that is, freedom for all working-class organizations, freedom of the press, unbridled trade-union freedom and the right to strike.

Applying these precise criteria, one can state (as the majority tendency of the F. I. has explained) that "bourgeois democracy" has existed for a very short time only in Argentina, in the best of cases during the Campora regime. What exists today is neither "fascism" nor "bourgeois democracy," but rather a Bonapartist regime based upon partial (and dwindling) mass support, a regime that has already destroyed many working-class freedoms and is rapidly cutting down on some of the remaining ones. To call the present regime "bourgeois democratic" --during the period of the "institutionalized" state of emergency, the anti-strike laws, the suppression of the working-class press, and the government-organized mass repression and mass murder of left militants--is to make a mockery of the term.

There are many intermediary phases between "bourgeois democracy" and "fascism," as Trotsky constantly reminded the dogmatists. Neither the Papen nor the Schleicher regime in Germany was "bourgeois democratic," but they were not yet fascist. Under the Horthy dictatorship

in Hungary and the Pilsudski dictatorship in Poland there were "free elections" of a sort; there were legal Social Democratic parties (even legal "centrist" parties); there were trade unions and even some strikes. But no serious Marxist would call these regimes "bourgeois democracies" simply on the grounds that they were not yet fascist.

Does that mean that we are indifferent to the destruction of what remains of working-class freedom in Argentina today? Obviously not. Does it mean that we would be indifferent towards a Pinochet coup? Nobody would advance such a preposterous proposition. But it does mean that you have to prove that a fascist coup destroying the Peronist trade-unions is on the agenda in order to justify making this threat the center of your political agitation. There is not the slightest proof of such an assumption. At this stage the Argentine bourgeoisie has neither the power nor the interest to break the CGT bureaucracy. What we are confronted with is not an imminent threat of fascism but internal divisions and struggles among the capitalists over the degree of repression against and freedom for the working-class movement that should be used. Indeed, the tendency that is closest to fascism, i. e. to the use of massive physical terror against the workers, is inside the Peronist government itself, centered around Lopes Rega. This tendency does not need a "coup" for further [sic] its goals, because it happens to be in power already. Any working-class tendency that, out of fear of "aiding" (nonexistent) fascist oppositions" concentrates its efforts on "defending institutions" (concretely of the Peron regime) that are becoming increasingly repressive is falling into a trap, for it is precisely the intensifying repression being carried out by the existing institutions that is paving the way for an even more repressive regime. Since the Ezeiza massacre, the main duty of Argentine revolutionists has been to warn the Argentine workers that behind the cloak of "institutionalization" lies the suppression of the essential freedoms and rights of the masses, which prepares the way for a new reactionary dictatorship; it has not been to line up behind the "process of institutionalization" against an imaginary "fascist danger"; that only disorients the workers, diverting them from the only means of stopping reaction: defending themselves against repression now!

When the PST continues to defend comrade Coral's formula "we will struggle for the continuity of this government because it was elected by the majority of the Argentine workers," they lay bare the whole confusion of their light-minded identification of democratic rights with state institutions. Coral's formula, they say, means:

"we will fight against its being toppled by a reactionary coup d'etat, although we have no political confidence in this government and will continue to oppose it from a revolutionary-socialist point of view. Our position is comparable in general to the one advocated by Trotsky in Spain during the civil war there." (Intercontinental Press, January 20, 1975, p. 70)

We shall come back to the fraudulent reference to Trotsky's position during the Spanish civil war. But the trouble with the PST's position is that no civil war between the Peronist government and "fascism" was going on in Argentina when Coral went to the "multisectoral," nor was any civil war going on when the PST wrote its answer to the United Secretariat. The only blood being shed in Argentina during that period was blood of working class militants killed by paid goons in the service of the government and its police and secret police, as well as the blood of revolutionary guerrillas and members of the bourgeois army engaged in skirmishes.

To identify the defense of democratic rights with the defense of bourgeois state institutions means in practice to cover up for the incipient civil war started by the Peronist government against the radical wing of the unions and to raise the specter of an imaginary civil war between the Peronist government and "fascism." It means to take a public stand in favor of the continuity of the government that not only suppresses the right to strike and many trade-union freedoms, but even organizes the murder of the PST comrades themselves. That is the sad balance-sheet of the confusion about "institutionalization."

We know that the PST comrades have publicly and courageously waged a campaign against the mass repression now going on against the entire Argentine left, a repression that has led to more than 3,000 arrests and some 500 murders in the past twelve months. We do not accuse them of having capitulated to the government. Our criticism stresses the contradictions of their positions and the inconsistency of their struggle against the Peronist government, which flows from theoretical and political mistakes. Beginning with the popular support that Peronism still commands, the PST draws conclusions that reduce or conceal the obvious responsibility of the Peronist leaders in organizing a wave of anti-working-class repression that is even broader and more dangerous than the repression under Onganía; the PST likewise fosters the myth that there is a "basic difference between the "institutionalized" government and regime on the one hand and those responsible for the widespread and bloody repression on the other hand. Neither of these positions facilitates breaking the masses from Peronism or furthering the struggle against repression and for the defense of democratic rights.

### III. A REWRITING OF THE HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM

In order to bolster their incipient revision of some of the basic principles of Trotskyism on how to fight fascism, the leaders of the PST have to begin to rewrite the history of Trotskyism. There is no other way to interpret their attempt to equate their position with the position Trotsky held during the Spanish civil war.

The method used is revealing in itself. Trotsky wrote hundreds of pages on the Spanish revolution and civil war.

He characterized that war not once but dozens and dozens of times as a civil war between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and not as a "war between bourgeois democracy and fascism" (the way the Stalinists, reformists, and bourgeois liberals throughout the world tried to present it). Yet the PST's answer to the United Secretariat declaration does not refer to that overall position of Trotsky, which can be easily documented but instead discovers Trotsky's "real" position in a single quotation from one of his articles in an internal bulletin directed against an obscure group of opponents in the United States. In like manner, the international minority faction found an obscure quotation in a letter written by Trotsky in 1932 to "prove" that he was a supporter of the "nationalism" of oppressed nationalities, in spite of dozens of statements to the contrary in basic books and documents. Such a method of argumentation can only be described as Sophist.

The PST leadership argues as though Trotsky considered the Spanish civil war to be a war between bourgeois democracy and fascism in which revolutionaries were duty bound to fight to defend bourgeois democracy. Here is what Trotsky really said about the civil war in his fundamental appraisals:

"The overwhelming majority of the exploiters of all political shades openly went over to the camp of Franco. Without any theory of 'permanent revolution' the Spanish bourgeoisie understood from the outset that the revolutionary mass movement, no matter how it starts, is directed against private ownership of the land and the means of production, and that it is utterly impossible to cope with this movement by democratic measures.

"That is why only insignificant debris from the possessing classes remained in the republican camp: Messrs. Azana, Companys and the like--political attorneys of the bourgeoisie and not the bourgeoisie itself. Having staked everything on a military dictatorship, the possessing classes were able, at the same time, to make use of their political representatives of yesterday in order to paralyze, disorganize and afterwards strangle the socialist movement of the masses in 'republican' territory." (Leon Trotsky: "The Lessons of Spain: The Last Warning," pp. 309-310 in L. Trotsky: The Spanish Revolution, Pathfinder Press, 1973.)

And further on:

"The commanding clique of Stalinists, in accordance with their counter-revolutionary function, consisted of hirelings, careerists, declassed elements, and in general, all types of social refuse. The representatives of other labor organizations--incurable reformists, anarchist phrasemongers, helpless centrists of the POUM--grumbled, groaned, wavered, maneuvered, but in the end adapted themselves to the Stalinists. As a result of their joined activity, the camp of social revolution--workers and peasants--proved to be subordinated to the bourgeoisie, or more correctly to



its shadow. It was bled white and its character was destroyed.

"There was no lack of heroism on the part of the masses or courage on the part of the individual revolutionists. But the masses were left to their own resources, while the revolutionists remained disunited, without a program, without a plan of action. The 'republican' military commanders were more concerned with crushing the social revolution than with scoring military victories. The soldiers lost confidence in their commanders, the masses in the government; the peasants stepped aside; the workers became exhausted; defeat followed defeat; demoralization grew apace. All this was not difficult to foresee from the beginning of the civil war. By setting itself the task of rescuing the capitalist regime, the Popular Front doomed itself to military defeat." (Ibidem, pp. 322-323. Our emphasis.)

And shorter and to the point: ". . . only the socialist revolution is capable of crushing fascism. . ." (Ibidem, p. 324).

Trotsky made this assessment from the beginning of the civil war. In July 1936 he wrote:

"Only the armed workers can resist fascism. The conquest of power by the proletariat is possible only on the road of armed insurrection against the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie." (Ibidem, p. 230.)

On July 30, 1936, he characterized the civil war as follows:

"At the present time, while this is being written, the civil war in Spain has not yet terminated. The workers of the entire world feverishly await news of the victory of the Spanish proletariat.

. . . From a purely military point of view, the Spanish revolution is much weaker than its enemy. Its strength lies in its ability to rouse the great masses to action. It can even take the army away from its reactionary officers. To accomplish this, it is only necessary to seriously and courageously advance the program of the socialist revolution." (Op cit., pp. 234-235. Our emphasis.)

And in the same article further on:

"A genuine alliance of workers and peasants must be created against the bourgeoisie, including the Radicals. One must have confidence in the strength, initiative, and courage of the proletariat, and the proletariat will know how to bring the soldier over to its side. This will be a genuine and not a fake alliance of workers, peasants and soldiers. This very alliance is being created and tempered right now in the fire of civil war in Spain. The victory of

the people means the end of the Popular Front and the beginning of Soviet Spain." (Ibidem, p. 239.)

Towards the end of the civil war, Trotsky summarized his view in the following passages of his moving article, "The Tragedy of Spain" (February 1939):

"The masses who has assured all the previous successes of the revolution still continued to believe that the revolution would reach its logical conclusion, that is, achieve an overturn in property relations, give land to the peasants, and transfer the factories into the hands of the workers. The dynamic force of the revolution was lodged precisely in this hope of the masses for a better future. But the honorable republicans did everything in their power to trample, to besmirch, or simply to drawn in blood the cherished hope of the oppressed masses.

. . . The slogan of the 'defense of democracy' has once again revealed its reactionary essence, and at the same time its hollowness. The bourgeoisie wants to perpetuate its rule of exploitation; the workers want to free themselves from exploitation. These are the real tasks of the fundamental classes in modern society." (Ibidem, pp. 330-331. Our emphasis.)

A great number of such quotations could easily be amassed. In face of such evidence, anyone who seriously maintained that Trotsky regarded the Spanish civil war as a "war between bourgeois democracy and fascism" and that he urged revolutionaries to make a "tactical agreement" with "bourgeois democrats" against "fascists" would be an ignorant or a falsifier.

How then can one explain the quotations from Trotsky's polemics against the sectarian Joerger-Salemme group, which seem to lend some credence to the PST's preposterous attempt to make a bloc not only with Balbin but with Trotsky too?

First, the date of the polemic must be carefully noted. It was written after the defeat of the Spanish workers in the Barcelona uprising of May 1937, when all vestiges of dual power, of organs of workers power in the "republican" camp had indeed vanished, when the proletarian revolution had been beaten, and when what remained in republican territory - contrary to the situation in July 1936-May 1937 - was indeed the shell of "decaying bourgeois democracy." It may be said in passing that from that moment on the defeat of decaying bourgeois "democracy" (whose jails were full of revolutionists and workers) was largely inevitable, barring a new and unforeseen upsurge of the toiling masses.

Second, attention must be drawn to the purpose of the polemic, which was not intended to give an overall assessment of the Spanish civil war, which Trotsky provided in the articles quoted above. The purpose was to answer a tactical

question that had arisen from the very victory of "democratic" counterrevolution on Republican territory after May 1937. Was the crushing of the organs of workers power and the intense repression against revolutionaries sufficient reason to desist from participating in the civil war against the fascists? Trotsky answered categorically, "No," and we share his opinion. Even in this miserable remnant of "decaying democracy" there was greater possibility for a new rise of workers struggles and of workers class consciousness than there would be in the event of a victory of Franco. It was therefore necessary to continue the struggle, without any illusion in its outcome. (See the passage in "The Last Warning," written nearly simultaneously with the polemics against the Joerger-Salemme group.) Revolutionists never withdraw into passivity or "neutrality" as long as the mass struggle is not over. That was Trotsky's lesson to Joerger-Salemme; it was not a reassessment of the Spanish civil war as a "war between bourgeois democracy and fascism."

Third, the PST has carefully taken Trotsky's quotation out of context. Reestablishing the context shows that Trotsky meant exactly the opposite of what the PST attributes to him:

"The alternative, socialism or fascism, merely signifies, and that is enough, that the Spanish revolution can be victorious only through the dictatorship of the proletariat. But that does not at all mean that its victory is assured in advance. The problem still remains, and therein lies the whole political task, to transform this hybrid, confused, half-blind and half-deaf revolution into a socialist revolution." (Ibidem, p. 295.)

When Trotsky said in September 1937 that the armed struggle then going on in Spain opposed two camps, one "subordinated to bourgeois democracy" (op. cit., p. 296) and the other fascist, he meant that we stand in the "republican camp" as it is, despite its rotten, traitorous leadership, precisely because those who were fighting in that camp were not the "liberal bourgeoisie" but the toiling masses--"confused," "half-blind," and "half-deaf," but still of our class and not an alien one--whom we have to make conscious of the need to take the road of socialist revolution, the only road to victory over fascism. The very argument with which Trotsky justified the presence of the revolutionaries in the "republican camp" proves the opposite of what the PST comrades want to prove: This justification is entirely based on the class nature of the contending forces--in spite of their misleaders and confused ideology--and not on the "superiority" of "bourgeois democracy" in the abstract as compared to fascism.

The lengths to which the PST comrades go in rewriting the history of Trotskyism is even more striking when they quote this sentence by Trotsky in order to support their policies: "If Hindenburg had entered into an open military fight against Hitler, then Hindenburg would have been a 'lesser evil,'"

This sentence, written tongue in cheek by Trotsky in 1937, raises the following questions: Did Hindenburg fight militarily against Hitler or didn't he? Was it accidental that he didn't? Did Trotsky call upon the German workers in 1932 to make a "tactical bloc" with Hindenburg "if only he would fight militarily against Hitler"? Why didn't he make such a call? Did Trotsky call upon the German CP leadership (not to mention the German Trotskyists) to make public pledge of support to Hindenburg (who, after all, had also been "elected by the majority of the toiling masses" against Hitler), if he would fight against Hitler, promising to defend the "continuity of his presidency"? Did Trotsky call upon the German CP leadership or the German CP and Social Democratic leadership, to hold common meetings with bourgeois liberal parties in order to make "tactical agreements" for the defense of "threatened democratic freedoms"? And if this was not permissible in Germany, why is it permissible in Argentina? What has the semi-colonial nature of Argentina to do with the question of how to fight native fascism?

#### IV. QUESTIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL MINORITY FACTION

At the January 1975 session of the International Executive Committee of the F. I., the comrades of the international minority faction unanimously endorsed the "general line" of the PST's answer to the declaration of the United Secretariat. Since the matters involved in this controversy are of a fundamental principled nature, we challenge the comrades who support the international minority faction and above all the cadre of the SWP and the European supporters of the minority to give us clear and unambiguous answers to the following questions and to indicate whether they maintain the implications of that endorsement.

1) Are you in favor of political blocs with "liberal" bourgeois parties against the "danger of fascism," be it "blocs" limited to "tactical political agreements" either in semi-colonial countries alone or in both semi-colonial and imperialist countries?

2) If you think such "blocs" are principled, can you give any evidence that either Trotsky or any authorized body of the F. I. ever expressed such approval in the past (political agreements "of a tactical and short-term nature" not being confused with technical arrangements)?

3) Do you think that any distinction between the defense of democratic rights and the defense of institutions of the bourgeois state is irrelevant or of only secondary importance; and, if not, do you believe the repeated public support given by the PST to the Peronist "institutionalization process" going on in Argentina since 1973 is compatible with principled Marxist opposition to bourgeois state institutions and bourgeois governments?

4) In several countries with large working classes (includ-

ing some countries in which the industrial working class already represents the majority of the active population) the great majority of workers have not yet attained political class consciousness and have not yet organized into separate working-class parties (even if only reformist ones), but instead support bourgeois parties both politically and electorally (like the Peronist party in Argentina, the Democratic party in the United States, or the Christian-Social party in the Flemish part of Belgium). Do you believe that these facts justify revolutionary Marxists' using toward those parties tactics similar to those traditionally applied toward the mass reformist and Stalinist parties of the working class--for example, the united front tactic, challenging them to take power, calling for a vote for them in elections "under certain circumstances" (if they present "80% workers candidates," for instance)?

5) Do you believe it is principled, admissible, and tactically correct under semifascist or fascist dictatorships to call for common campaigns by working class parties and "liberal" bourgeois parties for "free elections"? If so, is this admissible only in semicolonial countries--in Chile, like in Uruguay for example--and not in imperialist countries like in Spain? What is the basis for this subtle difference in the nature of "antifascism" (not to be confused with a genuine anti-imperialist struggle)?

6) If, as we believe, you reject such policies for the USA or Belgium, do you approve them for Argentina, under the pretext that it is a semicolonial country? For what specific reasons would the principle of political class independence of the working class not apply to Argentina? Do you accept the extension of the concept of the "anti-imperialist united front" to giving critical support to bourgeois governments with popular mass bases, different and

distinct from supporting specific anti-imperialist measures by these governments? Isn't that Lora's line in Bolivia, which you strongly criticized together with us?

7) Do you think that "basically," or "to a large extent," the Spanish civil war was a war between "bourgeois democracy" and "fascism" and that therefore the primary task of revolutionary Marxists during that civil war was to defend bourgeois democracy against fascism (while, naturally, maintaining the political and organizational independence of the working class and criticizing the "insufficiencies" of bourgeois democracy, the "inadequacy" of the military struggle and conduct of the "democrats," etc.)?

A clear and frank answer to these questions will go a long way toward indicating the extent of the political differences between the majority tendency and the minority faction inside the F. I. These questions are obviously much more important than any past or present dispute about "guerrilla warfare" or "armed struggle" in Latin America. They cannot be encompassed in the pat formula of a struggle against "ultraleftism." They touch on basic aspects of the theoretical and political heritage of Trotskyism. No diversions or polemical smokescreens can make it possible to evade answering these questions. The way the rest of the minority faction answers them will show us whether a right-wing deviation, the beginning of which was already visible during the pre-world-congress discussion, has now taken a new and dangerous dimension. An honest and thorough self-criticism by the PST, and a clear endorsement of that self-criticism by the other constituents of the minority faction, will go a long way toward convincing us that the danger of such a right-wing deviation has seriously receded.

The IMT Bureau  
May 31, 1975

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June 30, 1975

United Secretariat

Dear Comrades,

From a copy of a letter dated June 5, signed by Duret for the Bureau of the United Secretariat, and addressed to the Political Bureaus of the European sections, we have learned that the Bureau made a decision to hold the first session of the projected International Cadre School from August 18 through August 30.

As all comrades of the United Secretariat are aware, this reverses the earlier decision, contained in a March 17 letter from Duret on behalf of the Bureau, addressed to the Political Bureaus of the sections, to hold the projected first session of the school in the fall, so that leading members of the Socialist Workers party and the Leninist Trotskyist Faction could participate in the school.

The project of an International Cadre School was discussed by Comrades Barnes and Hansen of the SWP and Comrades Walter and Duret before the IEC meeting in January. At that time, it was suggested, and we concurred, that it would be essential for leaders of both the LTF and the IMT to participate in every level of the Cadre School, including a basic sharing of the teaching of the sessions. Also at that time, that is, at least five months ago, we informed the comrades that the SWP convention would be held during the week of August 17-23 and that in the week following the SWP convention, there would be a meeting of the Steering Committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction. We also explained that we had already made reservations for the site of the convention, paid a deposit, and could not change these dates. All four of us mutually agreed to schedule the first session of the proposed International Cadre School sometime in the fall. This agreement was reflected in the March 17 letter from the Bureau, which explained, "we propose that the first [session]--which will be a sort of 'test school'--be held in the end of September-October-November period." However, a letter dated April 14 from Duret on behalf of the Bureau, addressed to the political bureaus of the sections and sympathizing organizations, indicated that there was to be a change in the date, to either August 18-30 or August 25-September 6. These dates would exclude any members of the SWP and the leadership of the LTF from participating in the school.

When Comrade Charles was here in early May in the capacity of an observer at the plenum of the SWP National Committee, we again explained the situation to him. He assured us that the dates would be changed back to the original agreement so that the SWP and the LTF leadership would not be excluded. But now we are informed through a copy of a letter to the European sections, that the Bureau has decided on the August 18-30 dates, exactly the dates that totally exclude participation by the SWP or LTF.

If these dates are adhered to, then the "International Cadre School" will have been effectively transformed into an "IMT Cadre

School" as there can be no leadership participation by the LTF or SWP. Since the information about the dates of the SWP convention and the LTF Steering Committee meeting was made available to the leadership of the IMT almost five months before they decided to change the dates of the school, we can only assume that this decision to scuttle the International Cadre School in favor of an IMT Cadre School was made deliberately. We believe this decision of the IMT is a serious error.

It would be far better to use our limited resources to hold a united International Cadre School, as first projected and agreed upon. We ask the United Secretariat to reverse this decision of the Bureau, and to reschedule the International Cadre School at a time when it can be held as a legitimate united effort of the whole international movement and not as a school monopolized by a single faction.

Comradely,

s/Barry Sheppard  
for the Political Committee  
Socialist Workers Party